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THE

CHRISTIAN AND THE INFIDELS;

OR,

THE LOGIC OF THE LIFE.

A TRUE STORY.

BY THE REV HUGH STOWELL, M.A.

THERE is one way, and that, after all, the best way, in which the simplest and least learned believer may meet and put down the subtlest infidel; a way in which he may face the scorner as David the uncircumcised Philistine, with nothing save a sling and a stone, yet, in "the name of the Lord of hosts," be "bold as a lion." The way I mean is, to contend, not so much by words as by deeds; not so much by the logic of the lip, as by the *logic of the life.*

I shall best make my meaning plain by a simple account, which shall be quite true, because it will be about what lately happened in my own parish, and partly under my own eye.

John—— is a dyer, who lives in a corner of my district. Some years ago, he was as bad a character as can be well conceived; a drunkard, a blasphemer, a cruel husband, a noted boxer, a practical infidel. As is usual in such cases,

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his house was the home of wretchedness, unfurnished and deserted; his wife was in rags, his cupboard empty, and debt and shame were his constant companions. About three years ago, however, he came under the notice of an assistant of mine. His wife was induced to open her house for a cottage lecture, and the husband, after a time, began to steal into the back part of the dwelling during the little services, and to lend a half-unwilling ear to what was going on. It pleased Him, who leads the blind by a way that they know not, to reach his conscience in this manner. He became very uneasy, and, spite of his mean clothes, began to attend church. For a time his anguish of mind was greater than can be told. But at last that Saviour who came "to bind up the broken hearted," and who died on the cross to save sinners, manifested himself to him as he doth not to the world, giving him "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," Isa. lxi. 1—3.

The calm morning after a stormy night is not a greater change than that which followed in the life and lot of happy John. All things became new. He set himself at once to wipe away the heavy scores which stood against him at the tavern and the shop, till at last he owed no man any thing but love. His house was made clean and tidy, and one piece of furniture after another was purchased, till the whole face of his cottage was changed. His wife and himself, decently dressed, were in their places at church whenever the sabbath-speaking bell bade them to the house of prayer, and ere long they were seen kneeling side by side at the table of the Lord.

A light thus put on a candlestick could not be hid. So striking a change in one who had been so notorious called forth much notice. He became a wonder unto many. Some admired, others mocked, and many persecuted him. His former infidel companions were more especially mad against him. They jeered him, reproached him, enticed him, swore at him, and did all in their power to draw or to drive him from his Saviour. But, deeply sensible of his own utter helplessness, he clung to the strength of God, and thus, out of weakness being made strong, his enemies only served to prove his faith, exercise his patience, and increase his watchfulness. The blast of temptation, which lays in the dust the plant which our heavenly Father hath not

planted, only roots the deeper every "tree of righteousness" which he has planted in the garden of his grace.

John had most to bear at his daily labour in the dye-house. It was his hard lot to work amongst a band of "Socialists," and they had it nearly all their own way. For a time, indeed, two men, members of a religious body, timidly took the Christian's part; but after a while, even these, worn out by annoyance, and ashamed of the cross, deserted both him and their profession of religion, becoming apostates, the vilest of the vile. The humble confessor was thus left alone, like a sheep in the midst of wolves; but he was not alone, "for the Lord stood by him." He was enabled to walk blamelessly and unrebukeably before them. Sometimes he reasoned with them, at other times he intreated them, but most commonly he did as his Master had done when beset by his accusers, "he answered not a word." His meekness was the more lovely, because he had been aforetime a terror to his companions, nor was there one of them who would have dared to provoke him. But now the gentleness of the lamb restrained the strength of the lion.

The quiet influence of John's consistent walk could not fail to be felt. His life was harder to answer than his tongue. A beautiful proof of this occurred one day. His fellow-workmen had been for nearly an hour decrying Christianity as the source of all crime and wretchedness, whilst they boasted what their system would do if fairly tried—what peace and purity would reign in their "New Moral World." John held his peace for a long time, till at last "the fire kindled," and lifting up his voice, he turned upon them and said feelingly, but firmly, "Well, I am a plain-dealing man, and I like to judge of the tree by the fruits which it bears. Come then, let us look at what your principles do. I suppose they will do in a little way what they would do in a great. Now there," said he, pointing at the two apostates, "there are Tom and Jem, on whom you have tried your system. What, then, has it done for them? When they professed to be Christians, they were civil, sober, good-tempered; kind husbands and fond fathers. They were cheerful, hard-working, and ready to oblige. What are they now? What have you made them? Look at them. How changed they are! But not for the better. They seem downcast and surly; they cannot give one a civil word; their mouths are full of cursing and

filthiness; they are drunk every week; their children are nearly naked; their wives broken hearted, and their houses desolate. *There* is what your principles have done. This is the '*New Moral World*' they have made.

"Now I have tried Christianity, and what has it done for me? I need not tell you what I was before; you all too well know. There was not one of you that could drink so deeply, or swear so desperately, or fight so fiercely; I was always out of humour, discontented, and unhappy. My wife was starved and ill-used; I had no money, nor could I get anything upon trust; I was hateful and hating. What am I now? What has religion made me? Thank God, I am not afraid to put it to you. He has helped me to walk carefully amongst you. Am I not a happier man than I was? Can you deny that I am a better servant to my master, and a kinder companion to you? Would I once have put up with what I daily bear from you? I could beat any one of you as easily as ever: why don't I do it? Do you ever hear a foul word come out of my mouth? Do you ever catch me in the public house? Is there any one that has got a score against me? Go and ask my neighbours if I am not altered for the better. Go and ask my wife: she can tell you. Go and see my house; let that bear witness. God be praised for it: *here* is what Christianity has done for me; *there* is what Socialism has done for Tom and Jem."

He stopped. The appeal was not to be withstood. For that time, at least, the scoffers had not a word to answer. They were overpowered by the eloquence of example.

My brethren of the working class, follow this beautiful pattern—"With well doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." "Be not afraid of their terror," 1 Pet. ii. 15; iii. 14. Witness "a good confession," 1 Tim. vi. 13. Stand fast, like Daniel before the den of lions; or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, before the burning fiery furnace. If you cannot argue, you can act. If you cannot reason down, you can live down the artful infidel. There is a logic of which, through grace, you may be masters; a logic so simple that a child can understand it, so conclusive that a philosopher cannot disprove it; it is the logic John made use of—it is *the logic of the life.*

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